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URBAN INSTITUTIONS AS UNIVERSITY CLIENTS.

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THE AUTHOR DISCUSSES THE WAYS IN WHICH THE UNIVERSITY CAN AND MUST HELP THE CITY SOLVE ITS PROBLEMS. HE SEES THE TWO MAJOR NEEDS OF URBAN INSTITUTIONS AS A MANPOWER SHORTAGE AND A KNOWLEDGE PROBLEM. THE UNIVERSITY MUST MOBILIZE ITS RESOURCES RAPIDLY AND RESPONSIBLY NOT ONLY TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF WORKERS AVAILABLE BUT TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY OF THESE PEOPLE. IT MUST REDEFINE JOB CONTENT, TRAINING, ROLES, AND JOB STATUS, REEVALUATE CURRENT NOTIONS ABOUT PROFESSIONALISM, AND GIVE ATTENTION TO THE INCREASING USE OF SUBPROFESSIONALS. IN REGARD TO THE KNOWLEDGE PROBLEM, THE UNIVERSITY MUST EMPHASIZE THE APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF SOCIETY AND WORK TOWARD CREATIVE INNOVATION, SEEKING NEW WAYS TO RELATE ITS RESOURCES TO COMMUNITY NEEDS. IT MUST ALSO SEEK A COMMON LANGUAGE TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN THE ADMINISTRATOR'S CONCERN FOR IMMEDIATE ANSWERS TO SPECIFIC PROBLEMS AND THE SCHOLAR'S CONCERN FOR THEORY AND RESEARCH. THE COMPLETE DOCUMENT, "POLITICAL BACKGROUND OF ADULT EDUCATION, THE UNIVERSITY IN URBAN SOCIETY," IS ALSO AVAILABLE FROM THE CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF LIBERAL EDUCATION OF ADULTS AT BOSTON UNIVERSITY, 138 MOUNTFORT ST., BROOKLINE, MASSACHUSETTS 02146, FOR $1.25. (EB)

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The University In Urban Society

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by

Sanford L. Kravitz

Kravitz discusses the ways in which the university can and must help the city solve its problems. He sees the two major needs of urban institutions as a manpower shortage and a knowledge problem. The university must mobilize its resources rapidly and responsibly not only to increase the number of workers available but to improve the quality and efficiency of these people. It must redefine job content, training, roles, and job status, re-evaluate current notions about professionalism, and give attention to the increasing use of sub-professionals. In regard to the knowledge problem, the university must emphasize the application of knowledge to the improvement of society and work toward creative innovation, seeking new ways to relate its resources to community needs. It must also seek a common language to bridge the gap between the administrator's concern for immediate answers to specific problems and the scholar's concern for theory and research.

Sanford L. Kravitz is on the staff of the Florence Heller School at Brandeis University. Previously, he was at the Office of Economic Opportunity as director of one of its bureaus. He has also served on the President's Task Force on t' e War Against Poverty and the President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime and has been active in local and state welfare councils.

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URBAN INSTITUTIONS AS UNIVERSITY CLIENTS

This past summer, the summer of 1966, has been one of crisis and tension in almost every large urban area of the nation and in a number of suburban areas. News broadcasts have been split between the violence in Vietnam and the real or anticipated violence at home. To say that we have desperately serious problems in the city is already a well-worn cliché. The Ribicoff hearings in August pounded home the desperation of mayors on the one hand and of the residents of slums on the other, with each often looking past the other. The city is desperately in need of help --help from wherever it can come. The mayors put the solutions in terms of cash and used figures that most citizens have come to associate with war. Thus there was a distinct air of unreality to Mayor Lindsay's fifty billion dollars. But in the lengthy recital of the woes of the city little was said of the two major dimensions of the problem: the manpower problem, and the problem of knowing what to do—the knowledge problem.

It is precisely in these two areas that the university must be called upon to make its major contribution to urban needs. It is in these two areas that urban institutions must seek help from universities. The university is the only major resource we presently have for this assistance. If it is not forthcoming, alternative resources will have to be developed, and that will take precious time. We have too little time to spare.

The Manpower Problem

The theme of a manpower crisis may be familiar to university officials involved in the business of training, but it is virtually absent from the discussions on the problems of the city. Yet the scope of the manpower crisis in relation to the city is vast.

In one of our largest cities, with extensive training resources and ample poverty funds allocated for the purpose, the development of an elaborate scheme of neighborhood service centers has been retarded for almost a year because of the lack of trained professional and sub-professional personnel.

After an exhaustive effort to organize over eight hundred community action agencies in the short period of about twenty months, the Office of Economic Opportunity encountered serious program delays because of

shortages in program-planning skills and personnel to man the programs.

Within the OEO staff, face-to-face consultation with communities and program communication have been retarded, in large measure due to the shortages of professional personnel with the skill, understanding, or substantive knowledge to engage in creative program review and development.

The challenge has, in small part, been met by OEO with packaged national programs. Each of these has had its team of trained consultants, e.g., Legal Services, Head Start, Upward Bound, Foster Grandparents, Teacher-Aide Training, and Home Health Aides. In large measure, carefully constructed guidelines and pre-filed applications have had to substitute for knowledge, experience, training, imagination, and genuine local program development.

The manpower crisis is not just an OEO problem but a Great Society problem. With any lessening of the war pressure in Vietnam, the Johnson administration is committed to new programs for people and for cities, committed for more reasons than idealism. Our predictable population growth, the predictable, sustained rise in our gross national product, which will be returning substantial funds to the federal coffers, the rising expectations of the poor, the increasing impact of problems of the cities —all these will force a continued increase in programs in education, social welfare, housing, health, and manpower training. The planners of most of these programs show little concern for the manpower which will staff them. There is a tacit assumption on the part of program developers, administrators, and educators that the free market will respond to any of our personnel needs. The universities in particular have not responded to the manpower crisis.

Herman Niebuhr recently noted that:

1. The public employment service still does not have a pre-service educational system;
2. The public welfare system has the illusion of a pre-service educational system in the network of social work schools; the bulk of the work is done by people educated for something else;
3. The mental health system has a highly professionalized pre-service educational mechanism, but it is highly class oriented. Relevant service to the poor is really provided by those untrained non-professionals called "aides" in the mental hospitals;

4. The educational system is the only one of all the service professions that has a well-established pre-service educational system in the network of colleges of education. Although the system produces almost enough persons, the level of training is, to a large degree, totally inadequate to the hard-core needs of the society.[1]

It is certain that for the next score of years this nation will face serious manpower shortages that will plague our efforts to implement community-sanctioned and legislatively approved human services programs. A manpower shortage of major national scope exists now, shielded like an iceberg from public view or substantial legislative concern.

It is both predictable and discouraging to note that the negative impact of the manpower problem falls unevenly on the backs of the very poor. When services are available, they are the last to receive benefits. When faced with ineffective, poorly trained, harsh, punitive professionals or sub-professionals, they are the least able to cope, to negotiate the service systems, to get their fair share of understaffed programs. One of the major achievements of the poverty program has been to focus national attention on the very poor. Much of the momentum of this concern will be dissipated unless we can deliver, and we can't deliver without people.

Clearly one of the issues for the universities committed to improving community action and alleviating the manpower shortage is how they can mobilize their training resources rapidly and responsibly. They must ask themselves what the sources of manpower are and how these sources and resources can be brought together.

They must also address themselves to the second part of the manpower problem (the part which has received even less attention)—the fact that more people alone will not suffice. They must undertake a serious, intensive, long-range effort at redefinition of jobs and roles and, of course, job status. Most of our existing training programs have been aimed at the sheer need for producing more. Little if any attention has been devoted to "more for what."

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1. Herman Niebuhr, Training as an Agent of Institutional Change (Philadelphia: Center for Community Studies, Temple University, July, 1966, mimeo).

The Office of Economic Opportunity has made and is making a historic contribution to the human services manpower issue by opening up and aggressively supporting the sub-professional concept. ("Sub-professionals" here are those workers in an agency who come from among the poor of the community served by the agency.) Support for the employment of sub-professionals is, however, only the opening wedge. Insufficient attention has been given by the funding agencies, the training agencies, and the program managers to the drastic need for job redefinition and the development of relevant training which must accompany such redefinition. In the past most local community action agencies merely established some artificial ratio of professional to sub-professional and proceeded to create jobs for the poor or near poor.

Job redefinition does not happen overnight. It requires breaking down of highly charged professional protectionist attitudes. It calls for careful study of tasks. Fortunately, there is an emerging experience being hammered out in thousands of local community projects. It is an experience that must be closely examined by institutions engaged in the task of training people for human services.

Much of what we need to do in human services training is beyond the experience of our present training resources. The human services professions tend to operate anachronistically, repeating their previous performances in an unsolicited encore. This pattern must be checked if we are to save lives and money and drastically improve our present performance.

Training institutions face the task of continuing to train people for what must be done now and simultaneously assessing the new job requirements, changing both tasks and training as they do so. Universities engaged in preparing personnel for urban institutions must assume responsibility for and insist on the necessity for re-evaluation of the roles different levels of staff must play. For example, instead of asking which professional functions a sub-professional can fulfill, they must first validate the function and the relevance of professional skills.

While training institutions gather knowledge and experience and engage in research in the task of training for human services, they must also pay attention to the goals and philosophy of the programs for which training is undertaken. There is no magic, for instance, in training sub-

professionals for a program in which the attitude of the professionals remains unchanged and program policies are unaltered.

As the notion of increasing use of sub-professionals grows, the dangers inherent in undisciplined assignment without training multiply. The danger of "locking in" at the menial, the trivial, the unimaginative task level is most critical. With the availability of hundreds of millions of dollars for sub-professional employment in the next year or two, pressures on training institutions will be enormous.

As universities move into this field of training, we note several contradictory notions at large. One is the idea that sub-professionals are better than professionals for any task. This position holds that there are advantages and understandings which come from being poor that overcome any advantages of professional training or advanced degrees. On the other hand there is also the theme that the sub-professional is essentially a hewer of wood and a drawer of water and serves primarily as a handmaiden or aide to the professional.

Current images, attitudes, and definitions of professional and sub-professional roles appear to reinforce the widely held popular image of the poor, the continuing belief that the poor make their own poverty. This will not change unless we can effect basic changes in American attitudes about occupational prestige. It is a major challenge to universities engaged in training to support the concept that working with and for human beings regardless of accompanying formal degrees is a role with significant status in our society.

Such an idea has many ramifications. Not only does it ascribe prestige to human service positions in the eyes of the community at large, but it establishes in the value system of the poor the high status role of human services. There follows from this goal the importance of full-scale involvement of the poor themselves as active participants in recruitment, training, and supervision. Thus, training institutions will have to undertake the use of sub-professionals as part of the training program staff.

It is a matter of serious concern that as critical as our human services manpower question is, so little has been written, so little job analysis has been undertaken, so few training materials exist, and so little has been done to capture the interest and imagination of the educational

institutions of this country in doing much more than business as usual.

Hundreds of millions of dollars will be available in the next several years for the employment of new personnel in the many areas of human services. Think of the possibilities which would exist if we were to focus the concerted attention of community agencies and educational institutions on the task of training for human services. Visualize a situation in which a real training and job development partnership existed between community and educational institutions.

The task calls for attention to job redefinition, job content, clarification of professional and sub-professional roles, changing of attitudes, concern for job mobility, performance measurement, revision of current ideas about the mix of training and experience. None of these issues can be ignored by those for whom training will be more than offering a few selected courses in conventional wisdom. Because of the scope of the problem and its complexity, the manpower question and the accompanying training issues must be viewed as the most urgent entry point for educational institutions into the field of urban needs.

The Knowledge Problem

There is no shortage of suggestions for solutions to urban problems. Ideas range from revisions of governmental structure to increased participation of the poor to complete federal withdrawal from urban problems. One issue is clear: We face an increasing escalation in problems as urban life becomes more complicated. The urgency of these problems requires the increased assumption of responsibility by universities for rapidly increasing our knowledge of urban life and urban problems. Public and private organizations—housing and redevelopment authorities, civic associations, planning commissions, social agencies, religious institutions, and industrial corporations—are becoming increasingly aware of the difficulties in solving many of their own problems without reference to the total fabric of urban life. The universities are in a better position to view urban problems objectively and with foresight and to place specific problems in their more general context.

One of the critical problems is the difficulty that civic officials have in stating their problems and their needs to universities in research terms. There is a continuing need to redefine the research function of

the university in applied terms. The practitioner, the operator, the administrator has little or no interest in theory or traditional scholarship. The methods of experimentation, control testing, and rejection are peculiarly suitable to the academic atmosphere. The scholar hopes to conduct his studies free of political pressures. The administrator, the policy maker, is impatient and annoyed when ready solutions are not forthcoming.

Time and the protective mantle of ivy are with the scholar, but retreat into "scholarship" can also be an alienating force. What is needed is the perspective and balance that can protect true scholarship but also be sympathetic and responsive to the urgent pressures on the administrator. What the administrator does not need is "wise guy" criticism.

The "massive breakthrough in the field of urban research is still to come. 'One urban slingshot or single urban stone . . . regardless of the hurler or the accuracy of the stone's trajectory' will not fully or finally dispose of the matter."[2]

The city is remarkably complex; it defies definition. It has different meanings for different people. The businessman, the wage earner, the shopkeeper, the politician, the slumdweller—all begin from different premises. Goals are not necessarily shared by the sub-groups which comprise the community.[3] If we are to solve the myriad problems that we presently face, new insights are needed, greater understanding must be achieved of the enormous complexity that is today's urban scene.

The university has the responsibility of making the knowledge its scholars possess and acquire available to the community so that it may be applied to the improvement of urban life. The traditional functions of the university—teaching and research—must now be extended to the application of knowledge to the improvement of society.[4]

There is no more urgent area of concern for universities than that of dealing with the problems of poverty. Yet universities have only just begun to define their responsibilities to the poor. The characteristic image of the university based rural extension program, as a case in

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2. J. Martin Klotsche, The Urban University (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 48. Internal quotation from Ben West.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., pp. 49-50.

point, is that of serving the middle-class farmer. For all practical purposes the poverty-stricken have yet to feel the impact of the university outreach. "The university's visibility in the inner core is blurred, while the wide experience of its personnel in dealing with other community problems is often unrealistic in dealing with slum conditions."[5]

The university has a host of new opportunities to pioneer with fresh, innovative, experimental approaches to urban problems.

> Creative innovation, rather than performing routine urban services, is the vital role of the university. It should "devote its energies to what might be described as the frontier of urban extension, exploring and testing new ways of relating its intellectual resources to the need of the community for urban knowledge. As it moves into new frontiers it should seek to leave along the way trained persons, institutional arrangements, and habits of mind—especially among urban decision makers at all levels—that will so function as to enable it in good conscience to disengage its resources from established or repetitive operations and reinvest them in exploration. Thus the university can contribute continuously to the strengthening of the urban society and to the maintenance of its own vigor and integrity as a center and source of knowledge."[6]

Outstanding examples of universities fulfilling this role are occurring in the demonstration and research program under the Economic Opportunity Act. In the field of health and medical services, Tufts University School of Medicine has undertaken a pioneering effort in the delivery of comprehensive medical care to the six thousand residents of the Columbia Point Housing Project in Boston. Breaking with the traditional methods for delivery of medical care to the poor, the medical school began with concern for quality and dignity of service and has in ten months built a program that is already a national model for the provision of good medical care to the poor. It has done this with imaginative involvement of the inhabitants themselves in the policy direction of the program. The University of Southern California School of Medicine is undertaking a similar program on a much larger scale in Watts.

The emerging field of legal services to the poor has captured the interest of a number of law schools. First on the scene was the University of Detroit, which made an institutional commitment to specialize in urban law. It has organized several neighborhood law firms manned by full-time staff as well as law student interns and is publishing a journal

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5. Ibid., pp. 53-54.
6. Ibid., pp. 55-56. Internal quotation from John Bebout.

of urban law based largely on the research findings of this effort.

OEO has found that many professional schools were quite prepared to "buck the establishment" in the development of new service forms. In this context it is well to remember Abraham Flexner's comments on the demands made on the university. "A university should not be a weather vane, responsive to every variation of popular whim. Universities must at all times give society, not what society wants but what it needs."[7] What society needs may not be what is always in the self-interest of the university, if that view is taken too narrowly.

This raises the issue of the definition of the "client" relationship and the special problems which accompany such relationships. One dictionary definition of a client is "one who consults a specialist for advice and aid." An alternative definition is "customer or patron." The patterns of the past indicate that all too often this "client" relationship has had either a noblesse oblige quality or the quality of the relationship of a laboratory technician to his experimental rabbits.

Programs which have brought the university into the heart of the city all too often lack the deep commitment of those directly involved. Frequently the senior university officials are sunshine patriots retreating in face of strong winds. There are notable exceptions to this, and the willingness of Syracuse University to stay with the much-discussed Syracuse Community Development and Training Project is one.

But the pressures of community and trustees to stay out of controversial areas cannot be overlooked. Community involvement must imply a pretty top-level commitment to stick out the consequences of a particular civic endeavor. It is equally important that civic officials and community groups gain a better understanding of the facts of life which govern university participation in civic affairs. Most politicians and public administrators along with neighborhood leadership are suspicious of intellectuals and university types. Careful attention must be paid to delineation of relationships. Some of the suspicions held by the "townies" are well founded. Unfortunately, it is the rare university administration that has set out to establish well-ordered relationships with community groups. The freedom to apply for research grants and demonstration

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7. Abraham Flexner, Universities—American, English, German (New York, 1930), pp. 5-6.

projects with the community has often been accompanied by a distant disinterest or self-interest on the part of administration.

It is the self-interest image that is so damaging to relationships with the locals and with government administrators. All too often federal officials and local skeptics view university participation in terms of 20 per cent of total budget in indirect costs of 46 per cent of salaries or what a top government official called "university profit." I offer no solid solution to this problem other than to urge university officials to keep a watchful eye on their comptrollers or government finance officers to assure that the federal research and demonstration funds are not supporting a host of other university functions.

Participation in community life and the symbiotic development of the community and its institutions is clearly part of the cost of running a university and the development of such relationships should not necessarily have to be preceded by contract negotiations. Participation in any depth in the community requires the fullest and highest level of commitment from administration.

To the challenge of space and the challenge of resolving our international problems, the challenge of civilizing our cities must be added as a major task for this century. It will be an unattainable goal unless the resources of our universities can respond quickly, appropriately, and with dedication.